

# Who Are You Wearing? With Susan Calman

**Kiri 00:00**

Hello, I'm stand up comedian Kiri Pritchard McLean here to tell you that I'm on tour with my brand new show home truths. I'm going all over the country, wherever will have me. I'm touring right through the spring, and then because some of you lovely lot have bought so many tickets, I'm now getting to talk for the whole of autumn as well. If you would like to get tickets, they're all available on my website. Or you can go to [littlewander.co.uk](http://littlewander.co.uk) and get tickets there. I can't wait to see you, and I don't want to brag, but I've got one hell of an outfit. Hello, and welcome to the Who are you wearing podcast. I'm Kiri Pritchard McLean, a stand up comedian who loves clothes, and fashion and style, and I talk to very stylish people, about clothes and fashion. That's how it works. This week, I'm chatting to stand up comedian, author and presenter and dancer Susan Calman. Guys, this is a long episode and my producer Joe and I listened to it about five times between us if not more, to try and cut it down. Turns out, it's genuinely all gold and we couldn't cut anything else out. So I hope you have some time this week to really savour it because it's a lovely long listen. This is a huge, really emotional and I would say very important episode. Susan is so open about the struggles that she's had and still has with her body and her appearance. So we chat about weight loss and body dysmorphia comes up on this episode. So just a heads up there. But there's so much joy in this chat too, and the joy from me as well. One of things I absolutely loved is her discovering just how much alternative comedy actually shaped her clothing style, and yeah, it's lovely. Also her, the way she's going to dress in the future. ? is very beautiful. Oh, about an hour in as well. It starts raining, and you can hear it sort of softly tapping on the window above my head in the podcast. Yeah, it's emotional. It's honest, big episode with bonus ASMR. So I hope you enjoy that. It is a fantastic, fantastic listen. So clear some time, kick back, and please enjoy me asking the fantastic Susan Calman, who are you wearing?

**Susan 02:58**

I went to a school. So from the age of four, I was wearing a school uniform, because I went to the nursery of my school. So I was wearing a school uniform, very early on, and a lot of the time I got my sister's hand me down clothes, because that was just you know, that's what happened. I'm not saying this is some form of difficult child Channel Five film about our horrible childhood. It's just the way it was, you got your hand me down clothes. But my sister and I are very, very different. In size in personality, and I think probably wearing her clothes and not thinking I looked good in them was the start of it, actually. Cuz she was really a feminine, like ballet or dresses, you know, all of those kinds of things, and I knew from a very early age that, that really wasn't my thing. So it was actually probably wearing clothes that I didn't feel comfortable in. Rather than thinking I really liked it was probably, so quite early on, because I probably had my sister's party dresses or something, you know, because I you know, I grew up. I was born in 74. So it was still quite traditional, and again, I have no complaints about my parents, they did their damn well, best, but there was still a very traditional gender rule thing of girls wear this and boys wore that. So we very much went through that I think in terms of what we were given to wear, and all I wanted to wear was my brother's, you know, army jumper. That's what I wanted to wear. But you didn't, you didn't necessarily do that at that point, because that's not what girls wore, and I'm constantly delighted when I have friends with kids whose children wear what they want to wear

or have a choice in the matter, and they're not necessarily made to be gendered in the way that I think perhaps we were back in the day.

**Kiri 05:07**

So when you're a little kid, now you're getting the hand me downs from your sister, and it sounds like it's quite sort of ? stuff. So did you have a strong sense of what you wanted to look like, did you, I know there's the army jumper, but was there like, oh, that I've seen that, that's what I want to look like?

**Susan 05:23**

I don't, I mean, I think genuinely probably Sandi Toksvig on number 73 in a pair of dungarees is, you know, and I said that to Sandy, when I first met her was, basically she was it for a generation or so of people who just didn't quite fit into the role. Sandy was, was the one who was there. Because almost all the other women on television were, you know, put in skirts and dresses and things like that, and at a young age, I saw her and thought she doesn't fit in, in the same way as French and Saunders, to be honest, also, Joe brand. So a lot of my influences were comedians that I was watching, because I have an older brother who was watching, was it Friday Night Live, Channel 5 for the young ones, things like that, and I was seeing those women on television. So actually, it was probably comedians Victoria wood. Who were, who was wearing tweed jackets on television and wasn't conforming. So I think it was probably watching. Gosh, I've never thought about that before. It was probably watching comedians on the television, they were who I wanted to be in everyway.

**Kiri 06:40**

That's incredible.

**Susan 06:42**

God I've never thought about that before, Jesus Christ! I should be paying you for this, my god!

**Kiri 06:50**

I grew up watching Billy Connolly in our house. So I'm amazed that I'm, although I am, my one true desire at the moment is a pair of good fitting flares. Maybe that's what I'm tapping into, and a banjo of course.

**Susan 07:02**

Of course, a banjo and a pair of flares. But it's, it's funny because the only people, alternative comedy was right there when I was growing up, and so women were doing things that were different, and maybe that's the first time I'd seen any women on television wearing what they felt comfortable and wanted to wear, and it's still the same, I watched Dawn French last night on that walk the lane talent show. She's bloody gorgeous. She's bloody gorgeous, Dawn French, and I think, god imagine having a crush on the same person for 40 years. Dawn French is the one I love. But Jennifer Saunders, all of those people, I think, just weren't conforming, and maybe that's it. I didn't want to conform. I didn't know what I wanted, but I didn't want to conform.

**Kiri 07:55**

Interesting, especially as you're in a uniform from that age. So who was dressing you then? Was it, mum and dad? Was it via the big sister? Was it influenced from cousins?

**Susan 08:07**

So mum. my dad had absolutely nothing to do with the situation he was only working, bless him, My mum because, and this is something I've spoken about with a friend of mine, I had a big chat with a friend of mine about fashion before this podcast, and she was saying, she used to meet our friends and they would go through each other's wardrobes and they were trying each other's clothes, and whilst I'm not saying I had no friends at school, I didn't have a lot of friends, and I never ever, ever did that. I never sat and had a pyjama party and talked about clothes and boys and everything else. So I genuinely feel like I'm a decade behind everyone else. Because I left home at 17, went to university and did what you're meant to do during your teenage years, I think at that point, and then only I think, genuinely, in my late 30s, did I actually start thinking about what I should be wearing and what suited me and what I wanted to wear. So I wore what I was given, when I was younger, you know, just put it on and off you go, so I don't feel I really found what suited me and what I wanted to wear until, you know, 10 years ago, and even now I think it's only in the past two or three years that I've really started to own what I think I want to look like, so it's funny I've only now started to really think about things because fashion to me, so I listened to the podcast you did with the lovely Sophie Hagen, and she is a queen in plus size, I believe was the description, I've got the disadvantage of being your plus size and short, and if you can imagine how difficult it is to find clothes being plus size, when you're short, it's absolutely horrific, and I would just wear whatever I could get my hands on, because it was just, you know, so difficult because the cut of everything doesn't work, and people people think, just buy petite clothes, but they think short people are thin. When you buy the petite clothes, because I can't get my arm into them, I can't get my arm into them. That's not a solution, and so it's quite difficult actually, to find, even when you alter clothes, if you think about the proportions of where your knees are meant to be in a pair of trousers, and you've got shorter legs, nothing, nothing is in proportion to each other. So I found it difficult my entire life being plus size and short. Because it's the worst of all possible worlds, to try and find anything that fits and looks good and doesn't look horrific. So it's been, it's been really tough, and I think it's only in the past few years. I've thought maybe I could get this altered, and maybe it will fit me better. But that's only because I now have money to do that. I've got, I can actually say to someone, here's 40 quid, can you make this fit me, rather than just wearing something that looks like a tent, which is essentially what things would look like on me before.

**Kiri 11:57**

That must have been so hard growing up as well, in that, like, it's such a difficult time as a teenager the conversations that you're having with your body anyway, and that's any person who can exactly conform to you know, standardised beauty norms is having a tough time as a teenager just as the fact, and then that you're a gay woman as well, and that you're shorter, and plus size is I just can't imagine. Well, I'm sort of an because I've always thought you're like, incredibly stylish, and I'm amazed that you have any kind of decent working relationship with clothes, because it would just, I think it was me I would tap out and I would you know, I'd be like that's not that's the thing. I'm not interested.

**Susan 12:40**

I struggle to be interested simply because I don't want the disappointment. It's like dating. Why bother dating when you know they're all arseholes? You know? So those five years of a single were a great time. You know, so why bother? Why go to the shops? Because it's not going to fit me and then I'll try them on, it'll just be absolutely horrific. So every item of clothing I currently have has been bought for me for a television show. I haven't been shopping for years. Because what happens is someone very nice comes, so there's pluses and minuses to this, someone nice comes to my house and brings a rack of clothes that I try on, and alters them for me, and it's great. The downside of it is I have no control over really what it is that I'm wearing. So in a way all I'm ever really looking at is does it fit me? So I'm always very jealous ? to go. I'm going to a party on on friday night, and you know, I've got, I've ordered loads of clothes and I'm gonna see if they suit me. I simply am saying will this fit me? That's really the bottom line. So I don't even really bother now. I'll buy myself a couple of bits and pieces, I buy a lot of shoes. Because shoes don't care what size you are in terms of you know what size you are. So I have a lot of shoes, because I often feel if I wear a nice pair of shoes I feel better about myself. But other than that, you know.

**Kiri 14:31**

Cuz you're not a jewellery person either. Because that's the other thing like, I got loads of shoes, bags and jewellery because the theory is I can't get too fat for those although there was a pair of platform shoes recently with an ankle strap that beg to differ. But yeah, if you're not, if you're not into the flanks of handbags and jewellery, which I've never, I don't really see you wearing much of, then yeah, it's shoes, isn't it?

**Susan 14:51**

No I mean, I was very like, I've got some tatty divine stuff, which I absolutely love. Because I think some of the tatty divine stuffs really beautiful. I've got a couple of, they like me to wear earrings on the television, so I'll do that. But I don't really, I'm not really bothered, and I get into trouble a lot because I was filming the new series of cruising, and there was formal night, and I didn't have a handbag, I don't have a handbag. I've got a very comfortable rucksack that contains everything I could possibly need. All my pills, all my stuff. Because when I go away, not that I always think of the worst case scenario. I always have. I've got antibiotics, I've got every form of medication, just in case. I've got a huge ziplock bag full of pills, and so they said you need to get a bag so they got me this handbag thing, which I didn't even know how to, I don't know what to do with it because it's not big enough to, it's not big enough to hold everything is it?

**Kiri 15:55**

Well not the ziploc bag of drugs. Why do you need antibiotics at dinner?

**Susan 16:03**

Look, I had my tonsils out when I was 21 and one of them grew back.

**Kiri 16:09**

You're a medical marvel I get it.

**Susan 16:12**

My right one grew pack. So I can still get tonsillitis, and when that when that fucker hits, it is really bad. So I don't have I've got one handbag, that's a Batman handbag, but right tissues, you can't show that on the telly. So I don't, no I don't. But I'll buy myself shoes. I've got loads of Grensons, I love Grensons. Because they've got a wee platform. So they give me that extra half inch. They're so comfortable. They're so lovely. So I've got loads of Grensons and so I'll buy shoes because shoes are something. I am not going to open them up and think, oh you're so fat, because they fit me, and so unlike, and I've seen my wife do it, when I've ordered a jacket, I can hear her behind me going, please fit, please fit, please fit because she'll know I'll get upset if they don't, if it doesn't fit. So the thing I think now, this is, you might, I don't know about you. Because you are asked to do press stuff, and you do press stuff, don't you PR things, photo shoots and stuff. I always remember doing, I find that very difficult when you turn up for a job, and they're presented with someone who's plus size, and I don't like the term plus size, actually, because it makes me think well, I'm not normal sized.

**Kiri 17:41**

When you absolutely are. Look around.

**Susan 17:43**

But plus size is a term that people will understand. If you say to people remember I'm plus size they will Okay, fine. I remember doing a photo shoot. This is a long time ago with two other very well known female comedians who are absolutely beautiful and wonderful and gorgeous, and this has nothing to do with them. This is not their issue at all, and I was with somebody else who wasn't a size eight or 10, and they had a huge rack for the other two women, and we were kind of ushered to the back, and we're given something to be, and I felt like I was annoying them by not being skinny, and it happens a lot when I go and, if you do a show where you have to wear something. They never have the right sizes because they just, sometimes people can't comprehend you not being skinny, and I find it quite difficult. I don't know about, I don't know about you when you've been in these situations. But it's often slightly embarrassing where you have to say to people, remember, I'm bigger than your usual person, and what, what a statement to have to make.

**Kiri 18:54**

Yeah, and also because sizing is so like, so sometimes you'll get a job as well, and they'll be like what sizes are you? and I want to be like, right but where you going? Because I'll be this size in one shop. I'll be two sizes up from that in another one. They're tight on the boobs. So I'll be four sizes bigger than, you know, like, and it's, and I just think that, oh, god yeah, it's such a, you end up in these harmful conversations because also I'm so, I've worked so hard and I'm working so hard, and I'm definitely not there with it, of like not hating my body and resenting it for getting any bigger. So sometimes my self esteem is based on the fact that I'm a certain two numbers. So I will shun items of clothing that are bigger in my own wardrobe or love ones where I'm at, you know, like I'm a 14 or a 12. So I'll hold on to that for ages because it gives me more self esteem which is absolutely pathetic. So then when you have to be real with yourself and like send the thing and be like well on the safe size, get 16, 18 because if it's you know, if it's something that's going to be tight on the boobs, then probably a 20 even bigger, you know, like and it's so difficult, because it churns up all that shit that you spend a lot of time pushing from your mind.

**Susan 20:04**

It's a very, the biggest struggle in my entire life, and I really struggle with this is I spend more time in my life thinking about how I look, and I don't mean how I look, I mean my weight than anything else, and my entire mood can be affected by how I feel, I look, and it's such a difficult thing to be. Because I've read all the books, I've read all the books, I've talked to everybody, I follow them on Instagram, I get it. But it's the same with any mental health issue or issue about self esteem, its that people can talk to you all they like about how you should be confident, you should be absolutely fine, and it's not even people on the internet telling me I'm fat, which they're very happy to do. Because I felt like this before the internet was invented. This is not something that's happened because of the internet. It's me. But the fact that, I never watched myself on television, ever. I've never seen a single thing I've done on television, unless I'm doing a voiceover.

**Kiri 21:19**

But it's so good. You make so much good telly.

**Susan 21:23**

But I can't stand seeing it. I can't stand seeing it, and I refer to myself as it because that's how I feel sometimes, and I try and be kinder to myself, but to spend your entire life obsessed with how you look, and your size, and I'm like you. If a stylist brings something and it's a size 20, I'm like, I don't know, thank you very much indeed, no, thank you. Whereas I can be a 14 in Marks and Spencers you know, because it doesn't matter, and people keep saying it's just a size. But when, I remember, I remember I've read all the books. Would you think you were more successful if you were thinner? Do you know what I mean? But I think having been around in this time and growing up. Where being overweight is seen as lazy. It's seen as slovenly. It's seen as unhealthy. It's seen as unattractive, you know, that you automatically, it's such an ingrained thing that if you're not a size 8 or a size 10, you're unattractive. It means that what I wear simply covers up something I don't like. If I could do one thing for myself, it would be to change that aspect of how I feel about myself because it affects everything, and I don't know how to fix it. I don't know how to fix it. Do you know how to fix it?

**Kiri 23:06**

No, but if either of us come up with the idea, can you text me babe? Because I know exactly what you're talking about. Thank you for talking so openly about it. Because I'll yeah, you get, there's a mad aspect of our job that you get a lot of abuse anyway, of people telling you what you already think about yourself and or worse, or the worst things you've ever thought about yourself. There's a weird moral judgement to being fat, there just is. So all these presumptions are made about your character, and then the joyous things like going to a friend's wedding or whatever suddenly becomes sheer trauma. Because if, you know, if for me, if I like, I don't fit in that dress I'd plan to wear or I haven't got, you know the right shoes or something I will just be, I will spin out so fast, and I Oh, gosh, I don't know how to get myself back from that edge at all, and it's yeah, it's so and also when I really struggle when all I'm thinking about is my weight like I mean, consumed by it. That's actually when I think at the moment my only, and this is very unhealthy, and this is not advice. That's the only time that I'm like right I'm going to exercise more because it sorts my head out a bit, and usually my body gets a bit smaller but not much more I don't fluctuate that much, and that's my only way of like if I exercise it makes me feel like I'm somewhere near proactive in inhabiting my body a bit more rather than hating it. But like that's also just,

if I get busy it's the first thing to go, is the first thing to go is looking after yourself. So then you're sat in a body that you've been told to hate.

**Susan 24:42**

I think though the thing is and I've thought a lot about this, that it's quite, it's not easy. I'm not saying that. It is easier to combat these things with exercise etc. If you are very rich and have nothing else to do. So I know people who have lost a lot of weight who are very, very fit because they have a personal trainer who comes to the house, they have a gym in their house, they have, food is such an issue. Well you know yourself, when I'm away filming, you eat what you're getting what there is, you know, this is what you've got. There is no other option. Sometimes when you're filming, you know, Secret Scotland or Grand Day Out look, this is what there is to eat. You know, and that's what you have to do, and I just, it's one of those. It's one of those things that I exercise. I'm doing it right now, because I'm feeling horrific about myself. The thinnest I've been, though, and this is what I always have to remember, when I did Strictly, and I was dancing from half past eight in the morning till seven o'clock at night, and I probably, and that was for 12 weeks. So full on 12 weeks, I probably went down a size. That was it. After doing it that amount of time every single day. But what happened was, and I remember, and it didn't help people saying, oh, you looked so good, Susan, you'd lost weight, you looked so good. Which feeds into of course, you're attractive if you lose weight, if there's less of you exactly, and I just, it's the thing I have struggled with for the majority of my life, and it doesn't, as I say I'm four foot 11. So that doesn't help very much. You know, in terms of obviously, if I was, if you think of it like blue tack, if it was five foot seven, I'd be normal, but I've just squished right down. So everything's just a little bit smaller. But you know, it's one of those, it's just one of those things that I don't know what to do. I would have to starve myself and exercise all the time, and my life, I can't do that. I can't do that. So accepting, what I would say is sometimes you will find something to wear that makes you feel like the absolute business. There's that, you know, you know that moment where you put something on and you think oh, yeah, that's the one. You know, I'm not just covering myself up I am showing myself off, and when that moment happens, that's a pretty glorious moment. It doesn't happen very often. But sometimes it does, and you start accepting what you've got, you know, because this is what I've got, you know, this is what I have, and it all works and I'm healthy, and, you know, it's that balanced, and I know people get annoyed when people whinge about how they look because there are people who are worse off in every way. But when it comes to mental health it's undoubtedly the thing that causes the most trauma I think in my life is how I look. Has that been there since you were a kid? I mean, were you ever put in something that you hated, is there, it sounds like it was difficult with the school you're from and your sisters clothes anyway but were you, yeah, were you ever popped in something that you were like this is, this is not me? I think it was, I was given a pair of dungarees with elasticated ankles once that made me furious. I don't know why. It was, it was the elasticated ankles that I took offence at, I've no idea why, I think I just grew up with a lot of very pretty girls. So there were lots of girls in my class who were really pretty and skinny, and wore lovely clothes, and I think I just from a very early age realised I didn't look like them, and I wasn't going to be like them. So it was nothing. I think it wasn't anything. One thing that happened, I think it was just looking around and thinking, and I don't think my sexuality had anything to do with it necessarily in that I've always, I've always been very comfortable with being gay. I've always known I was gay. I mean, I didn't come out till slightly later in life. But that never, I've never felt guilt. I've never felt anything about that. But I think feeling other didn't help, perhaps, that I always knew there was something different about me, not just how I felt about boys. But just in terms of, I was

aware I think as well that in terms, in those days in terms of lesbian culture, there was very definitely a way that you could identify yourself as being gay, and I think that's, that's another thing which I find very fascinating about lesbian culture in those days in terms of how you dressed. This is a generality everybody, please don't come at me on the internet. It was pretty much ?, your picture your picture of who you were, and so I think that was, I think it's actually an amalgamation of not fitting in, wanting to be gay so badly. I wanted everyone to know I was gay. I wanted to meet someone else who was gay. I didn't meet anyone else who was gay, and I just wanted to meet another lesbian, that's all I wanted in life was to meet another lesbian because now with the internet, I think you can feel connected. But I didn't feel connected. So I think the first time I put on a waistcoat, I felt very much myself.

**Kiri 30:42**

Oh, gorgeous. Was there an item of clothing or an outfit that you put on you just never wanted to take off? I'm thinking childhood now. I'm thinking about when you're growing up.

**Susan 31:11**

I had a valuer jumpsuit with a pointed collar, I believe it had shorts.

**Kiri 31:18**

What colour?

**Susan 31:19**

I think it was blue, and I think there's a photograph of me in it, and I believe, I will send it to you, and I think I felt like the absolute business in that jumpsuit. Yeah, I think that's what it was because it felt quite, you know, yeah, I think there was a Velur jumpsuit, which I think my sister had a matching burgundy jumpsuit, and I believe that's one of the moments I felt very happy.

**Kiri 31:49**

I would struggle to see how anyone could not feel happy and in a Velur jumpsuit, to be honest.

**Susan 31:53**

Well, I was asking because I might have to go to America, and I was asking my friend whether or not I should get another Velur jumpsuit to travel and you know, like, like you see in the heat magazine. When you see people on long haul flights. I should get a Velur jumpsuit. Do you think I should? Because she wasn't sure.

**Kiri 32:11**

Absolutely I do, also last time I flew, which was years ago, I had a tracksuit which had a sequin peacock on the top and a sequin peacock on the bottom, and my partner was like, I was like its incredibly comfortable. My partner's like you look like a famous person on a long haul flight and I was like, brilliant.

**Susan 32:26**



That's what I was thinking and I'd get a big pair of Jackie O sunglasses, and I'd be like, no, don't talk to me, don't talk to me as I entered economy on a long haul flight to Florida. Right, I'll get, I'll get one then, I'll get one.

**Kiri 32:43**

Definitely. When you're a teenager, what were the big trends and were you going in for things, were you trying and seeing if, you know, try those hats on and see if they fitted metaphorically and physically?

**Susan 32:54**

I mean 80s. So back when jumpers, obviously there was a lot of batwing, there was a lot of that kind of stuff going along, jumpsuits as in all white boiler suits with paint splashed, lots of neon, lots of ? related items. I had a pair with highlights very bad. Yeah, full 80s perm and highlights. So white boots, pixie boots, all of those kinds of things. So yeah, I mean, my mum tried to, you know, keep us up with the fashion. But again, I would usually either have the matching one to my sister or my sister's, hand me down. So it was always about a year out of date. So yeah, but it was all batwings and all of those big hair, huge hair, all of those kinds of things, and yeah, I mean, you couldn't not, you couldn't not. That's why I find these days quite interesting because you can buy anything from any era but in those days, because there wasn't an internet you had to go to a shop, and you could only buy whatever there was in that shop, and there wasn't quite as much retro kind of vintage stuff. Nowadays, there's so much fabulous vintage stuff. But in those days, it was literally what's in. I think Topshop maybe started at that point. But you didn't have any choice, so you had to wear 80s fashion. That's what it was. Lots of Frankie says relax T shirts.

**Kiri 34:29**

You know you were saying that you sort of felt other? Did you, did this? Did you have rebellion then when you were a teenager and if so, would it have shown up in how you dress yourself?

**Susan 34:41**

I think when I went to university, so when I was 17 I went to university, shaved the head, nose piercing, I wore a German army coat, had three different pairs of Doc Martens very much dressed completely against what my mum would want me to dress like, so I used to go around in, as I say, Doc Martens and a big army coat and a shaved head and piercings, and I was out to, I was out to change the, smash the patriarchy. You know, nowadays I've given up. When I was 17, it felt like at university that I went at it for a while. So I very much, I think my rebellion was to wear secondhand clothes. There was a place called Flip in Glasgow, which was a big secondhand shop, and I would go in there and just buy, all my clothes were from there, you know, and I think that was my rebellion was to wear second hands slightly, because everything stank. Fags and you know what I mean. I smoked very heavily at the time. So you know, me and my little roll ups and my army coat and my Doc Martens. Quite the picture.

**Kiri 36:01**

It's still a great look, though. That is still the kind of uniform of people rebelling, I think.

**Susan 36:06**

Oh, absolutely. But I think it is. I think that still, and I still think of my Doc Martens, my cherry Docs I saved up to get and think, you know, and then I ended up having a tank girl boots which I absolutely loved as well. A big pair of boots is a very favourite thing of mine. Because if you've got a big pair of boots, you can kick down a door. I always think, but it's uh, you know, I think that's why I think people should go to university or further education, just to live a life, and experiment, and everyone should have the opportunity to go and do that, if not for the degree but for the experience of getting away from home and trying on really stinking clothes and smoking roll ups if they want to, and, you know, falling asleep on mattresses in the middle of the street, if you think they got home. Of course, that didn't happen to me. Because you know, and then I started being a lawyer, and then I wore another uniform. So I had to wear suits. So actually, I didn't until I then started comedy, then I was wearing another uniform. So a lot of my life, I've worn uniforms, and never really had any free choice to do anything, and then of course, you start a stand up comedy and you don't have any money. So you just go back to vintage shops again, don't you?

**Kiri 37:31**

Yeah. Well. So your style now, which is, I've seen evolve. So the first time around that year was at a laughing cows gig, and it would have been about 2010 or 11, and I remember you had a shirt, that you were closing the gig and you had a shirt on and it was definitely more on like the tailored side. But then as I saw you and I think get more and more successful and more money. These amazing like, really smart tweeds, things start coming in and waistcoats and things and it fit. Always beautiful shoes. I see this kind of Susan coming out, and then we see the strictly Susan and then we see you, not like the strictly is necessarily, you're not in sequins and tweed, although I'd love to see it. But you know, the stuff that you wear now isn't as formal, I'd say in telly terms. So the style that you have, which is obviously ever evolving. What age do you think that started appearing at? Showing at?

**Susan 38:31**

I think the thing is, and the tweed, by the way, for anyone who's interested was from a place called the house of brewer in Scotland in the sale department. If you're looking for tweed, I'd head to the house of brewer. I'm not paid to advertise this, but my god, do they have a lot of tweed, and I think the thing was, my agent had told me that I needed to have a brand. I needed to have an identity because you know at the fringe, There's 17,000 kabillion people, and I think the tweed and everything else was an effort to make myself distinctive. So that I had, because I was told, it's a different agent than the one I have now. She was very good at all of this kind of stuff, and she always said to me, you should wear the same thing that's on your poster when you're wandering around the fringe. So everyone knows its you, and I was trying, I think at that point to stand out from all the other comedians, and I thought, I liked, essentially I wanted to be Doctor Who, I want to be The Doctor and that's really what, that's all it is. But I think I was just trying to, I was trying to find an identity for myself as a comedian by doing that, so whilst I enjoyed it very much, I do like the tweed and I, you know, I like all that kind of stuff. It was actually partly a business decision to try and find an identity for myself so that people would go. That's who that is there. Because the reality is my comedy was absolutely fine. I tell a series of stories that sometimes have a conclusion. But I wasn't a political comedian. I wasn't a musical comedian. I wasn't, you know, I didn't have anything for anyone to become excited about. So I was trying to make myself more exciting.

**Kiri 40:27**

I'm not, I'm not nodding because I agree with you. I'm nodding because this is exactly why I wear sequins. I had nothing that made me stand out, and I was like, well, they might as well remember what I'm wearing, and then it works quickly. They go the one with the sparkles, and now I feel like I do know what I want to say and how I want to say it, and it's sort of, it's this uniform that is actually makes things very easy for me. I'm like, Oh, I'm, well, I know, I'm gonna wear something shiny. I just have to pick what colour but I did it for the exact same reasons. I felt like I needed a hook. Because my, my standup didn't really have it.

**Susan 40:58**

It's something which actually, you do start thinking about, because when you're going to the fringe when you're trying to say to people, who am I as a stand up comedian, and people are looking at posters and flyers, you're trying to find your own identity, and through your posters, through your photographs, and everything else, and it's something and that was so difficult. I've got a lovely photographer I use called Steve Althorne, who has taken all of my photographs because again, he makes me feel very comfortable, because I hate having my photograph taken as well, and he always makes me feel very comfortable. But we would always try and pick something that people would go well, that's definitely who that is, and strictly, it was the first time I'd worn heels and a dress, and I think it gave me more freedom and made me feel less frightened of trying new things. So I do have dresses, now I've got tartan dresses that I wear if I need to. So they're in the wardrobe, and I think it made me a little bit more confident. I never wore makeup before and I am quite happy doing that, and I think it let me express a bit more of the feminine side that I'd always been slightly averse to embracing.

**Kiri 42:12**

That's interesting. So obviously as a kid, you're having this very feminine look put upon you, and then as an adult, you've shied away from that, but then you feel like you found some confidence, and there's a bit of, bit of everything coming in.

**Susan 42:27**

I think it's partly because I didn't ever want to admit that one of the things I wanted to be was pretty, because that's vain, and that's simple and that's, do you know what I mean? But actually I do sometimes just want someone to say you look really pretty. Because I think if you overcompensate as someone who's slightly shorter, and plus size, you overcompensate by saying, Don't look at what I look like, I've got brains, my brains are up here, and you don't want, you just dismiss how you look because you don't want to address it, or you've convinced yourself that, that is the patriarchal kind of establishment and actually sometimes you go, I just want them to say I look pretty, because I do and I think Strictly let me embrace that part of myself of saying actually I do want to look nice, and I want people to say that I look you know, pretty and sometimes that's what I want, you know, and now what I do, the shows that I do now unfortunately are, I'm often thrown off a cliff or I have to do, it's very much Challenge Annika style work wear is what I wear these days, because I do these travel shows and I love doing them. But they're long hours, and I'm driving a campervan that doesn't work properly, and so you do that, but I, like my hair's changed, the one thing that's changed in my life is my hair. Oddly, after Strictly because I've got very very fine hair. I've always disliked it in that I can't do anything with it. If it's long, it looks awful. But I started kind of saying Oh, I could put it back I could, you know colour it, I

can do things with it, which again, I shied away from for such a long time. So I think seeing myself in wigs and going, oh that looks quite good actually, you know, was quite, was quite interesting so Strictly, Strictly just opened a door to, I think things that I'd been ignoring for a long time. That actually I did want to express myself.

**Kiri 44:39**

That's so interesting, because I mean, it's such a huge undertaking in that you're on this programme that so many people watch and you're learning a new skill, and for some people, let's be honest, it's not a new skill. Some of the people who do it, they're topping up on existing skills. So that's a huge shunt out of your comfort zone, and then in addition with you, it's like you're now gonna have spray tan full face wigs. Like, did you just have to close your eyes and take a leap of faith? Or were you excited about experimenting with that?

**Susan 45:12**

I was frightened, very frightened, because I didn't want to look like a fool. I was frightened, I would look like, like an idiot in dresses and stuff like that. Do you know what I mean? You know, having to take your kit off and be spray tan next to Debbie McGee is an experience. I'll never forget, lovely women, Debbie. But it was fucking weird. You know, Gemma Atkinson is an absolute goddess and Alexandra Burke, and you know, all of these incredible and the dancers are just like Amazon's, but you just have to embrace it. The greatest advice I have ever been given, and I remember, I think of every day was by somebody who I won't name in case I'm not allowed to say, but it was someone involved in strictly who I remember saying to them, keep it gender neutral Susan, should we do this? and they said to me, Susan, if you're going to kiss it, fuck it, and I remember that every day, and I do that, in all my shows. When someone says to me, do you want to do this a go? If I'm gonna kiss it, I'm gonna fuck it. Yeah, if I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna do it. Don't do things half hearted, don't, don't, you know, and, and I, I, after strictly I've embraced that. I think in my life of, I think the older you get, the more you realise your time is becoming shorter, and that's one thing I'm definitely thinking about, and after the pandemic, and everything else of, I sat in this house for two years, basically. You know, go out there and do something, and I try, I try, I really try when I'm in one of those days where I'm thinking, I don't want to leave the house. Because I look awful. Remember, you couldn't leave your house. So get out of the house. You know, so I think the pandemic gave me a lot of time to think about some of these things, not in a positive way necessarily. But I do, I do now, try and say to yourself, to myself, get perspective, Susan. You were miserable when you couldn't leave the house. So just get out of the house and put on a jacket that you think makes you look vaguely okay, and if somebody whispers behind your back that you're there. Just walk past them. You're okay, you're absolutely fine. But it's tough. I know. I know. We both experienced it a lot. I mean, I advertised for a bank up here. So I'm on billboards all over the city, and that's fun walking past that, seeing your big spammy face. I went to see, imagine having slight body dysmorphia. We went to see the new James Bond film, and just before it started, my advert came up on a cinema screen. Stuffing my face with popcorn and a hot dog at the same time. So but you've just got to, you've just got to get through it, haven't you without damaging your own head, and it's the most difficult thing I think I've ever, I've ever dealt with is just being kind to myself, is the most difficult thing I can do. I'm so unkind to myself sometimes. Like if I heard you speaking to someone else, the way I speak to me, I'd think you were the worst person in the world, and yet I speak to myself in a way

that I would not accept anyone speaking to anyone else. But that's sometimes the most difficult thing isn't it? Being kind to yourself?

**Kiri 48:58**

It's yeah, I think what you're saying is gonna resonate so much with so many people, and I think especially people like you who are dynamic, intelligent, educated, women who are incredibly capable, and people look up to, and then there's this, all this stuff going underneath, where we're actually fighting a daily battle with our own bodies and our brains, and I just don't know, men, or as many men who are having that daily, hourly conversation with themselves, and sometimes I think that's when I get cross with myself. I'm like, the hours you put into hating yourself. You could have written a fucking film in this time. You could have you know, like, you'd be the best stand up in the world if you put your brain to stand up as opposed to hating yourself, or you know, it's wild, isn't it? Imagine what we could achieve.

**Susan 49:53**

But the thing is, the only thing I always take out of this in a positive sense is that my self hatred, and I would say hatred because it is that bad at times, makes me more empathetic to others. So I think the positive is, if I was somebody who sailed through life thinking I was the absolute bee's knees, no problem at all. I wouldn't have that sympathy I have for others, the empathy I have for others, so that when someone is on a television show I do, I will make sure they're as comfortable as possible. I'll ask them if they're okay with things, I'll make sure that they're, are you happy for us to be filmed? Do you want to check my mixture, they don't go on camera looking shit, you know, all of those kinds of things. But just generally, I think being an empathetic person, being an empath is one of the best things you can be, and I often think you can't be that person unless you feel things deeply yourself. So the fact that I do feel this deeply about myself simply means I feel deeply for others as well, and I am absolutely aware the messages I get from people saying that seeing me on the television makes them feel more confident about themselves because I'm a different shape, and I'm a different, and I know that, I'm absolutely aware of that. That by me being on the television, it can make other people feel better about themselves, and I just have to hold on to that as well. You know, when they see a plus size short scottish woman at the age of 47 doing synchronised swimming. They think, well maybe I could do that. You know, and so it is important to carry on and to not hide away and there are days where I want to hide away but that doesn't help does it? If you just hide, it doesn't help does it? Just got to put on another pair of shoes, buy another pair of bloody shoes that I don't need.

**Kiri 52:21**

Do you think now about hair and makeup as part of the outfit then?

**Susan 52:25**

Yeah, and also when you're working like long days, you know like when you're up filming and you're all up at five like I'm just painting on a lion. That's all I'm doing. I'm making my face look as good as it will look at two o'clock in the afternoon, doesn't have to be like how I drag. Absolutely. I am completely aware of how important it is, and I'm also completely aware of, from an ethical viewpoint. How distressing it is that hair and makeup as a skill in television is one of the first things that goes in a budget. Because good hair and makeup can, my god can that make a difference to how I feel and how I look. Absolutely, and it does, I know now from seeing it. It makes a huge difference and it is now part

of, I sometimes will wear makeup when I leave the house now, because it makes me feel better. If I'm going out of the house and I will wear makeup when I didn't used to. Because it does make a difference. So yes, I do. I would never have paid any attention, when I first started stand up. Not a single jot of attention was paid to anything. Whereas now, not that I do stand up anymore. I haven't since 2016. But it does make a difference, and I've got a lot better at it. My first ever job was with Children's BBC had to do my own makeup, went into Frazers in Glasgow and a woman showed me how to do makeup because I didn't know how to do it, and I bought everything that she told me to buy, and I still buy everything she told me to buy. Because that woman and her kindness she'll never judge. I don't think she'll even remember but that, the kindness she showed me and showed me how to do makeup, has stayed with me. Because I didn't know how to do makeup. I've never worn makeup. You don't wear makeup. I'm a feminist. I don't wear makeup. Oh, my God, and now I think no, but it makes me feel good about myself. No. But I just, you see I love your makeup. I think your makeups absolutely amazing. I can, I just do the same thing. I do the same thing, and I look at your makeup sometimes and think my God, I don't know. I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that because it's just so, it's fabulous, and be, I just, it's just that with my wheelhouse is to have the fabulous makeup that you have in your head. I think you look gorgeous all the time. If that's a compliment you want. So I always, I'm always very careful if that's what you want so then you do, because, and I think what you've managed to do is you have managed to create that brand image for yourself, you really have, and that's, you know, and it's very, it's a useful thing, it's a very useful thing to have. Because we know in this industry, how we look and being identifiable is very important. So people know who we are. I have had many a compliment for my performances and mock the week, and they're talking about Zoe Lion. I was gonna get Zoe a t shirt saying I'm not Susan, and I would wear one that says, I'm not Zoe, and it's just because we're two, it's just because we're two lesbians. We're completely different people, we look very different. There's about a four foot between us. But again, you'll often find that, that people will get become confused by us all. I'm often called Sarah in emails, I'm also not Sarah Milliken. Or Sara Pascoe, or any of the other Sarah's who currently exist. But you know, people do sometimes I think, is get slightly confused by which female comedian they saw, and so having that brand identity, using clothing is a very useful thing, and also, you don't need to think when you go on stage if you're touring. My last tour was 120 dates or something. Trying to find something to wear every night that's different. Just wear the same thing.

**Kiri 56:37**

Exactly. Throw on those stinking sequins and deal with it at the end of the tour.

**Susan 56:43**

I had a suit that I wore that my God by the end of it was standing up itself, because it was just all. But I wasn't going to get it, I wasn't paying to get dry clean for fuck sake. That was, that was an expense that I did not need when I was doing art centres around the country. I couldn't afford that.

**Kiri 57:04**

I want to ask you, are there any trends that you've, or even items or styles of clothing, you've repeatedly tried to pull off, but it's not happening for you, that you need to just let it go?

**Susan 57:13**

Okay. So I talked about the velur jumpsuit I had, I have a friend who wears jumpsuits, and you wear a jumpsuit sometimes, and I really want to be able to wear a jumpsuit, and I've tried them and they look horrific, and I wish I could throw on like a boiler suit or a jumpsuit with a necklace and just leave the house and it just, I look. I look like I've escaped from a woman's prison, and I just, it doesn't, I don't look, so I've got a friend who just looks effortlessly to me, you know that effortless glamour that you're always looking for, that oh, look at me. I'm just effortless. You know? and she looks like that, and I don't look like that. So jump, the jumpsuit thing I envy. But I've never managed to, I think Sophie talked about this. I'm apple shaped as they used to talk about it.

**Kiri 58:15**

Ah yes, the famous apple. Thank you to Trinny and Susannah.

**Susan 58:18**

Bare skinny legs on quite a bit of a tummy. So the jumpsuit doesn't necessarily flatter any of the areas that can be flattered for me. Anyway for me. So jumpsuits, I would love to wear.

**Kiri 58:32**

Have you tried playsuits? So the short versions? Because that will change the proportions of it, because I think you would look brilliant in a playsuit.

**Susan 58:40**

Could you just confirm to me what a playsuit is please, because I don't know what that is?

**Kiri 58:44**

Well, it's a, it's a jumpsuit with the legs cut off. So it's, you step into shorts, and then you put the top bit on, and sometimes they're long sleeve and sometimes they're short sleeved. So yeah, that's a playsuit, and I think it would look cracking in a playsuit.

**Susan 58:57**

This is the same kind of discussion I had with a friend who tried to describe to me what a tankini was. I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't know what a Tankini is. It's like a bikini but it's long top. Don't understand. So, okay, maybe, maybe, maybe I can ask someone to look into that for me and see if there's anyone who wants to...

**Kiri 59:21**

You can chuck like tights on or coloured tights underneath and yeah, I've got, I've got a few of them. I've got a black velvet one with a deep V so you can put a top on underneath it as well. Yeah, I'm a big fan of a playsuit, as a shorter woman, not as petite as you. I'm five foot three and a half. I struggle with the proportions of jumpsuits and playsuits but playsuits are much better.

**Susan 59:44**

Okay, I'm going to Google playsuit in a minute and just see what kinds of things come up.

**Kiri 59:50**

It's not going to take you down some weird alleyway I promise you. What's the oldest item of clothing that you've had for a just, a really long time and hopefully still love?

**Susan** 1:00:02

So I've got a shirt I bought, which was my pulling shirt I used to call it when I went out on the pull in the classical gay scene, which is probably 25 years old, and it's still in my wardrobe just because it was this cool 70s shirt, and I still love it. I haven't had it on in years, but I've still got my pulling shirt. I never pulled, don't get me, I never pulled, never pulled. I met my wife on a blind date through an advert in a magazine. I didn't, you know? So I've still got my pulling shirt, which was very unsuccessful. But I still keep.

**Kiri** 1:00:41

I love it, I really want to see the pulling shirt. That's another thing I'm getting my picture of. Is there an era that you wish you existed in for the fashion?

**Susan** 1:00:52

20s, 30s, the 20s or the 30s? I feel that that's my time for a number of reasons. I think, hair wise, clothes wise, I think I would have been buying on in the 20s or the 30s. Where I think womens clothing was very much, everything was acceptable, it would seem, you could be quite masculine, you can be quite feminine, you can mix things up. I think that's the time I should have been. That's the time. Because I think that's when, if I had the money, I would be having clothes made for me that were very much of that kind of era. To make me look like Cate Blanchett, honestly, because we're like twins.

**Kiri** 1:01:39

No, I totally get that kind of, you're right. 20s, 30s fashion is so good for that, you know, classic, elegant, masculine, female tailoring, I think is really...

**Susan** 1:01:52

I think beautiful tailoring, that to me is still the thing that I admire most of all, in a piece of clothing is beautiful tailoring, you know, to see the expertise and craftsmanship that people can put into a jacket when you see a beautiful jacket that's beautifully tailored, and the artistry that's involved in that. I think it's absolutely stunning. I would rather look at a beautiful jacket than a painting. Wow. Because I think, I think the structure of a beautiful jacket is absolutely stunning. When you see these things, so to me that is beauty is, tailoring is beauty.

**Kiri** 1:02:33

That's so lovely. Because it is a mixture of art and fashion and architecture as well with, with the tailoring, it's you know, it's crafted, isn't it?

**Susan** 1:02:41

Absolutely, and they can make, clothes can make you look better and feel more confident. Yeah, if they're tailored properly, and I think when you see a piece of tailoring, a beautiful jacket, with beautiful fabric that's chosen and draped, it's just completely stunning in the same way as a beautiful pair of shoes that's made, you know, carefully, you can tell the quality, and it's that kind of thing, which you



would, you would keep for years and it's one of those things, I don't have pieces of clothing that cost a lot of money, I have nothing, I don't think I've got a single thing that you would consider designer. I don't think I've got a single thing from anyone that's not Marks and Spencers or maybe hobbs.

**Kiri** 1:03:28

But you've had stuff made right?

**Susan** 1:03:30

Yeah I mean, I had those two suits made which are still somewhere in the wardrobe. But that's, that's really it. I've got the name of a beautiful tailor in Glasgow and I've just not had the chance. You've said that she could make something for me, and I think, I think that's something in the future. So I've got a plan. This is my plan, do you want to hear my plan?

**Kiri** 1:03:53

I'd love to hear the plan.

**Susan** 1:03:54

Got to work, so I'm 55 right, work like an absolute dog. So I'm 55 and then I'm disappearing. All social media is gone. Everything's gone, and I'm moving. I'm moving to Italy, and before I move to Italy, I'm going to get this lovely woman to make me some clothes, and then I'm going to disappear off the face of the planet and no one will hear from me again, and I will be absolutely delighted with that. So I've got eight years to earn enough money to disappear off the face of the planet, and that's what I want to do. That's the aim.

**Kiri** 1:04:27

That's amazing. But I don't want you to do that. I want to still be able to watch you in things.

**Susan** 1:04:34

By that point. I'll be 50, 55, I know already. I'm doing all right because I can play much younger, my spotlight membership says I can play 16, no problem at all. I will just be, I never wanted to be famous. I never wanted to be well known. I never, when I started in comedy. There was no Twitter, there was no internet. I loved my job passionately. But I also sometimes want to just disappear, and I think at 55, off we pop, get the pension, move to Italy, rescue greyhounds and be a very happy woman with my beautiful Katharine Hepburn suit that this woman is going to make for me, and you can come and visit because I'll have a wee cottage, and I'll be flapping around in my lightweight trousers and my playsuit perhaps, and then, you know, then I'll experiment with even more clothes, who knows what's gonna happen, but I think, I think I am just coming into a point in my life where I'm really trying to be comfortable with myself. But it's really difficult, really difficult, and I feel heartfelt sorry, for the directors and producers I work with who have to deal with me sometimes. I'm not in anyway a difficult person. But there are times where I hate being in front of the camera, and they talk me down from a ledge sometimes. Which is difficult for them, I think. So I'm in swimming costumes, I'm, imagine being in a swimming costume on the telly. It's bloody awful, but they're very nice to me. So I'm very lucky in that I work with lots of very kind people who help me. But I think, I think I'd quite like to not do that in about 8

years time. Saying that, I mean, if I'm offered the host of a large entertainment show on a Saturday night...

**Kiri 1:06:48**

You'll be shuffling around like Des O'Connor into your 80s.

**Susan 1:06:52**

Absolutely. You'll be going, I thought she said she was going to retire?

**Kiri 1:06:56**

I thought I was gonna get all her programmes. What is your relationship with shopping like then? Is it something you look forward to? Do you dread it? Is it online? Is it in person?

**Susan 1:07:16**

Online, I know the brands that I can fit into, I know the sizes I am, I tend to buy the same kinds of things. I will only go shopping if it's an emergency, you know, if I'm going down to London to film, Qi, and I need to get a top, and I need to know it fits, I'll go into, but again, I'll go into the same shops and the same brands, and because I know they fit, I know they will fit me. Because also you know I have to sit down so I need them that are roomy around the stomach. So that you know, I did a show once with, a Frank Skinner show, I can't remember what it was called, and I didn't realise we're gonna be sitting on bar stools. Oh, Jesus, and I was wearing something that just oh no, it was awful, and I spent the whole show thinking Jesus, I'm wearing the wrong thing. So now I always ask, am I sitting down? Is there a desk? So that you can work out whether or not, what you're wearing will fit with what's happening, so I envy my friends who say, let's go into town and have some lunch and do some shopping. Like they have fun because it's, it's not fun for me at all.

**Kiri 1:08:30**

Do you have any more luck with secondhand or vintage stuff? Or not?

**Susan 1:08:34**

I mean, not really. Because the other thing is when you think about the cost of the vintage stuff, plus the old, I still have to have altered, you know, and that's the thing is that in a way, sometimes it's easier to get newer stuff that can be altered than vintage stuff. What I would say is that the cat protection branch in the southside of Glasgow gets all of my old television clothes. So if anyone is four foot 11, you'll find a lot of very interesting clothes in that shop. So what I tend to do is I'll do TV shows, and then I give them to charity shops. So the cat protection branch in Glasgow has a ready supply of, 'as seen on television' clothes from Susan Calman. I love it. What's your, how do you feel about, I'm sort of getting more aware of the environmental impact as well of clothes, and I used to be chronic shopper and get, you know, 10s of things every month, and now I'm trying to be like, have a very big long conversation with myself about like, do I need it, and I'm just going through a stage now of trying to swap more stuff with friends and people who've got similar tastes similar sizes. What's your view on that? I mean, I think it's a very important thing. There's an ethical question. There's an environmental question. There's lots of things and it's something which I struggle with generally in my job about carbon footprints, about, you know, all of those kinds of things. I've just bought an electric car, and I grow all my own fruit and veg,

I'm trying my best. I think the issue that I have is, when I do, so I think last year did some of the like 38 hours of television. Last year, I was away from April till I mean, two weeks ago, I was on the cruise till two weeks ago, I have to have clothes to wear, I have to have close to wear, and I work with some very lovely stylists who are also very ethical, they are very ethical, and we try to get local designers, we try to get local clothes. But at the same time, I've got a budget that's given to us by our production company, and that's what we've got to spend. But for example, in when I did the hogmany show a couple of years ago, we got a Scottish designer to design the jewellery, to design the suit, to do everything to try and promote that. I give everything I possibly can to the local charity shops. I could be doing much more, there's no question I could be doing much more, I could be doing much more in a great deal of my life than I am just now. But it's just, it's quite a difficult thing because I have to wear clothes on the television, and I have very little control. Sometimes I'm told to wear free stuff that the production company has been given to keep the budget down and I have to wear what I have to wear. Why don't do is buy anything else. So I can't remember the last time I bought myself anything to wear. So what I try and do is not add to things by buying anything out with what I've got for the shows that I do, and it's not that difficult for me because I don't really like shopping. So I try not to add to things. You know, I bought myself a T-shirt that had a sweet corn on it, though, that I loved, and it said I'm freaking sweet because I just, it made me laugh. But that's the last thing I bought myself. So I try and I try not add to things, by buying anything else. But I know there's a huge thing and I follow you and I follow lots of other people who talk a lot about the ethical aspects of who's making the clothes and all of those kinds of things, and I'm hoping one day I'll get to a stage in my career where that's something I have more control over. But right now I don't particularly have a huge amount of control over it. It is and I think, I think, I try my best to, so for the six episodes of cruising that I've just done. We had one set of T-shirts that were worn for all six episodes, I did high street stuff rather than designer stuff. So at least it was more affordable. I mean, for me, part of the thing is trying to make sure that I'm wearing stuff that's affordable, in a way so that I'm not spending disgusting amounts of money on clothes at a time when people don't have a lot of money.

**Kiri 1:12:35**

Yeah. Well, like so many other people in their job and their work. Like it's like, who out there who, you know, goes out and buys the best ethical sourced black trousers and white shirt for work, you don't do you, you're like, I'm gonna get through this, it's gonna get stained, or it's only going to be, you know, last X, Y or Z. It's, it's, it's needs, its needs must, isn't it? Also you were done doing the work of, when, you know, other people who look like you, see you on television, and then go, gosh, she looks amazing, and they go and get and they're like, Oh, well, I need 400 quid to wear that shirt.

**Susan 1:13:45**

Yes. So I know that the seasalt coat I wore in grand day out caused quite a stir and a number of people bought it after after seeing me in it, which is the first time I've been a fashion icon. So it's just, it's one of those things that, it's just for me, I would rather make sure, for me it's, it's making sure that I'm doing things that are affordable or wearing things that are affordable. Because, so for the hogmany show last year, I wore some of the same clothes I wore the year before, because I didn't want people to think that we'd gone out and spent 1000 pounds on clothes. So I try, I'm always conscious of, is making sure that, I'm not making people feel bad if they don't have any money, if they don't have the money. You know, because I would hate to think, so if you look up what I'm wearing on grand day out it's a 14 pound T-

shirt from Marks and Spencers. That's what I'm wearing. I'm not wearing anything more than that. Because for me that's quite important that I'm not spending a huge amount of money on clothes that are thrown away. The combat trousers I bought from Marks and Spencers last March, were worn every day for six months on grand day out, and I still have them and still wear them, and they're absolutely mankey. But you, I wear the same things, and I've got the same trousers that I'll be wearing on the next use of cruising, that I wore on this series of cruising, and I might need to get some new tops, because, you know, microphones damage things and things look a bit, but I'm trying to reuse as much as I can for the next series, so that we're not buying new stuff. So for example, my wetsuit Kiri, which I have, of course, I've got a wetsuit, that will stay with me forever, and theres stuff I got for the Norway cruise into our bank. So if I ever do cold weather stuff, I've got all of that, I don't need any new stuff. So I'm trying to reuse as much as I possibly can. I know and I know it's, I could be doing better, but I'm trying as much as I can to reuse.

**Kiri 1:14:59**

Also you would have been perpetuating the idea that an outfit is for one occasion, which is bad. Best thing you've ever bought secondhand or thrifted or vintage or charity shop?

**Susan 1:16:18**

A tuxedo jacket from, it was a place because I think it was called starry starry night in the west end of Glasgow, and that made me feel like a million bucks. Because I thought that was the point. I'll just wear it with a pair of jeans and stuff, and it'll be you know, casual. It didn't quite look like that. But I think that was, that's one of the things I really do love about vintage shops is you can go in and they just had a whole row of tuxedos. You know, if I could have my wedding day again, Lee and I would be in those wonderful tuxedos with the frilly shirt.

**Kiri 1:16:59**

I love those and they use wild colours as well.

**Susan 1:17:05**

Yeah, that's what I think we would, if we could, because again, on our wedding day, we paid for the wedding ourselves. We both bought suits, we could wear again. So we bought one she could wear to work and I bought one I could wear for a corporate if I needed to do it. Whereas now, I would totally go full Austin Powers I think.

**Kiri 1:17:27**

If you renew your vows, Please invite me just so I can see this new look.

**Susan 1:17:32**

We're coming up to 20 long years. I'm sure that's not the word she uses about me.

**Kiri 1:17:42**

We're getting towards the end now. I want to ask you, do you see your style changing as you get older? Or do you think this is it now, this is me?

**Susan 1:17:52**

Well, I think it's going to change dramatically. I absolutely do. I think I've told my wife, I really want this tailor that I know, Alice, to make me a tweed cape. You know, Margaret Rutherford, you know, Margaret Rutherford. Right? I want a tweed cape like Margaret Rutherford, that I can put on, and I think I'll probably start embracing that slight eccentricity that I haven't so far. I think it's going to become more, slightly more eccentric, but what I want more than anything, I need to get into wide leg trousers, which I'm still not sure about, I feel a pair of wide leg trousers, a top and a tweed cape, I think is going to be the business for me.

**Kiri 1:18:46**

Oh my gosh, I love the sound of that. I have, I have a tweed cape, and it's, I feel a million dollars in it. It's yeah, it's a vintage one, and it's, it's green with a bit of purple on it and I think a bit of blue, and it's got a hood, but I just feel like, and also whenever I wear it people are like wow, like because people don't wear capes enough. I've been saying this for a while.

**Susan 1:19:12**

I completely agree with you. I completely agree with you. We should be weaing capes.

**Kiri 1:19:19**

They're really practical to wear as well. Because also when I wore my cape, I can put my handbag underneath it and then my cape over the top. So I always, because I always get worried about you know, like getting around late at night after gigs and stuff like, Well, you gotta get through a cape to get to this handbag. Yeah, I feel much safer and enveloped in a cape. So I can't wait to see the wide leg trousers and the cape.

**Susan 1:19:41**

Well, I just think, I just think, I think I'm going to end up like Katharine Hepburn. That's what I want. I think that's what I've always wanted. I think I've always wanted to be Katharine Hepburn, and I think as I get older I'm probably just going to start doing that. I'm not her and I don't look anything like her. But it's like my granny. My granny always wanted to be a film star, and that's where I get my love of Melina Dietrich from, I used to sit in front of her gas fire and watch old films and I called her the Greta Garbo of knighthood, you know, and I think, in a way this comes from my granny, that she always wanted to be a glamorous film star. But never did it. That I think I'll probably live my life like a glamorous film star, even though I'm not, when I'm in my cottage in Italy. Flying in my velur jumpsuit to Miami. I'll probably start living my life like a film star, even though I'm not one, and I think that, that will make me happy. I think, because I think it's what I've always wanted to be, but I've never done it. So that's probably, I'm going to end up as Katharine Hepburn.

**Kiri 1:20:59**

That's your final pokemon form is Katherine Hepburn.

**Susan 1:21:02**

Exactly, that's what's gonna happen, and I think on my gravestone I want, I want she lived her life like Katharine Hepburn. That's I want on my gravestone.

**Kiri 1:21:10**

I love it. Is there an item of clothing you could always see yourself wearing?

**Susan 1:21:13**

That I could always see myself wearing? My duffle coat. I've got red duffle coat that makes me look like Paddington Bear, and I love that duffle coat so much, and I bought it from a school shop in Glasgow. So it's a school duffle coat for like kids or something, and I've had it for eight years, and it's one of those ones you put in a suit cover, and you keep it good, and that's my red duffle coat because I don't think there's anything cuter than a duffle coat and I always feel like I'm going off on an adventure. You know, you've got some sandwiches in your pocket and you're off on a treasure hunt.

**Kiri 1:22:00**

I was talking about duffle coats just yesterday with a friend and they're just the toggle buttons. Everything on it is, is so good, the hold, the way it sits, it's clean lines. It's always a great material. Yeah, I am a huge fan of this duffle coat keep it around forever. Are there any trends that you're hoping never come back?

**Susan 1:22:20**

Reversible jumpers.

**Kiri 1:22:22**

But it's two jumpers Susan.

**Susan 1:22:25**

But they're the most unflattering piece of clothing you'll ever see in your life. Reversible jumpers must never come back.

**Kiri 1:22:37**

The final question is, it could be seen as a miserable one but it's meant to be celebratory is, you've very sadly reached the end of your life it's time for you to cross over to the other side. So what would you, you look like you're desperate for the time off.

**Susan 1:22:57**

Right okay.

**Kiri 1:23:01**

What would you wear to be buried or cremated in, or shot out of a cannon in, whatever your preference?

**Susan 1:23:07**

My Wonder Woman outfit I was given when I did strictly, my custom made Wonder Woman outfit. Which I've still got with the proper Wonder Woman boots. Yeah, my Wonder Woman outfit from strictly that's, I have to go out like that. That has to be it.

**Kiri** 1:23:24

Oh, gorgeous. You know what, When all killer was touring America, I kept buying like American themed clothes because we were going to wear them out there, and so I was always searching for like glitter, you know, red, white and blue, glitter, stars and stripes, all that kind of thing, and I found this pair of glam rock knee high platform boots that were red glitter with a big white badge with a blue star in the front and got them and as soon as I put them on, I was like, these are from a Wonder Woman fancy dress. Yep. Never been able to wear them. But one day, one day I'll have the occasion where I can wear enough stuff. So it doesn't fully look like I'm just, you know, wearing smiffys off casts. But yeah, that is such a great choice for you.

**Susan** 1:24:09

It's got, they made a pair of boots for me, the person who made Gal Gadot's boots on Wonder Woman made the boots. So they're a tiny size three and a half inch pair of Wonder Woman boots, which were custom made for me, and so they are the only custom made, I've never had shoes made for me. But they because I've got some sizable calves from my ? flying days, and they fit beautifully, and I can't think of a better way to go out of this world than dressed as Wonder Woman. I think that's the only way to go out.

**Kiri** 1:24:46

I think you're right.

**Susan** 1:24:47

Do you know what else I'm doing at my funeral, can I tell you what else I'm doing at my funeral? I've already told my wife this, you know, in American films, they would wheel a television and a VHS in, in the middle of the service I'm going get them to wheel in a TV and I'm going to pre record like an announcement for everyone and they have to watch it. Like some of you may not know this about me, and I'm gonna say something really dramatic, and I'm going to be wheeled down the aisle in my coffin to John Grant's greatest motherfucker, and that's going to be the way I go. It's all planned.

**Kiri** 1:25:23

This sounds good as the wedding, when you renew your vows.

**Susan** 1:25:27

Better than the wedding. Because my mother and father, if they're still alive will be humiliated by all and it'll be delightful.

**Kiri** 1:25:37

Oh, Susan, that sounds incredible. Please book me a front row ticket to your funeral.

**Susan** 1:25:42

Absolutely. Yeah, no problem at all.

**Kiri** 1:25:45

Thank you so much for chatting and for being so, so open and so honest, because I also think there's an element of our job, and there's an element of pressure, especially to, to those of us who aren't size eights, and tens to be like, I'm confident, everything's great, because you feel like you're flying the flag, because there's so few of us, and to actually have a proper, honest conversation about how that's really hard to do, I just think will mean so much to so many people, and you are so honest, and important. So thank you so much for that.

**Susan** 1:26:19

My pleasure. It's one of those weird things, you can be confident and lack confidence at the same time. No one needs to be one or the other, you know it's not that situation, is it? That you can be completely confident even one moment and lack confidence the next moment, and I think, I think making people feel less alone is one of the greatest things that we can do, isolation and loneliness is horrific, and so if people listen to this, and say, when I wake up in the morning, and I look in the mirror, I absolutely hate myself, you're not your own. I think a lot of us do, and so it's not something that's odd or the other, to feel like that about yourself. But what we have to do is find a way to get through that, and hopefully, we'll all get there. You're fabulous. You're wonderful. You're gorgeous. You're amazing, and I know that no matter how many times people say that to you don't necessarily believe that. But one day, hopefully we will both believe that about ourselves, I think.

**Kiri** 1:27:26

Yeah, I hope so. I hope so. We're working on it, aren't we?

**Susan** 1:27:30

Yes, we are working on it. It's a bit of a long term project. But at the same time, Rome wasn't built in a day as they say.

**Kiri** 1:27:40

If this was a house I would never bought it if I knew how much work there was going into it.

**Susan** 1:27:45

We're one of those houses on homes under the hammer you're watching and, 'oh they made a big mistake'.

**Kiri** 1:27:50

Where's my manager to talk this shit out?

**Susan** 1:27:53

There's a lot of structural work required of that one.

**Kiri** 1:27:56

Oh, definitely got subsided somewhere.

**Susan** 1:27:59

Absolutely. Well, it's been a pleasure. Thank you very much for letting me talk to you.



**Kiri** 1:28:02

Oh god, its been absolutely gorgeous. Oh, Susan, what a woman. I was just hanging off her every word when we spoke but, listening to that conversation back, there was just so much stuff that I was vigorously nodding along to as well. You know the bit when she was talking about not buying things or trying things on thinking, oh well I like this, but thinking, will this fit me? Oh my gosh, I'm sure that there's, I think that is a conversation I still have with myself all the time, and I'm sure there's lots of you listening to that as well that definitely had that resonate. Can you hear that? Before you could hear the rain on the window, and now it's the wind, Storm Eunice man, it's absolutely hammering this house. As I said to Susan, I know so much of what she's talking about is going to speak to so many of you and I, do you know what, I think in relation to that, another glorious thing about her is, even though she clearly finds it hard to be, you know, a person, like, you know, a famous person, a person with an elevated platform, with elevated visibility. I think that the bit she struggles with, the fact that she's so persistent and pushing yourself forward, and being aware that her visibility actually brings other people comfort, and that she takes the positive from that and just sort of deals with her internal struggles, knowing that actually representation of people who don't look a certain way, you know, or a certain height or whatever, or a certain age or demographic. I just think it's a, it's a big thing, and I think it's a thing that she should be commended for, and also the fact that she speaks openly about it because I think lots of other people feel like that, that they really struggle with the visibility side of doing a job that they love. But also being aware that sometimes it's important to just exist and exist loudly, even when it's difficult. So I really, really commend her for having that conversation so openly. I love it when you guys get in touch as well. We love chatting to you, we have a lush email from Lucy this week who says dear Kiri and the team, I absolutely love the podcast and you make Monday mornings (almost) a joy to wake up to. I'm always fired up to go to a proper... oh I love this. I'm always fired up to go on a proper chazza crawl when I finish each episode, preach mate. Love this morning's with H, oh what a great episode that was, and almost tripped up on my run when you were discussing Mark Owen's T-shirt. Because I have spent the past 25 years trying to get hold of one. It's by Hysteria Glamour, a brilliant Japanese label, who were huge in the 90s, I used to have a red 70's style long sleeved T-shirt with Charlie's Angels in silhouette over the top with Hysterics Angels written on it. Oh my god, and then Lucy has attached a picture of Bobby Gillespie wearing the short sleeved version, love it. Lucy goes on to say, I stupidly gave it, gave it away to a boy I fancied at uni, and he still wouldn't go out with me. He doesn't know what he's missing. But I recently managed to track one down on Ebay, phew I'm so glad there's a happy ending to that story. Thanks for the burst of nostalgia and keep up the great work. Lucy. Lucy, thank you so much for that. I am getting nostalgia. I didn't expect to get so much nostalgia from this but you know when, especially, you know when H was talking about those Paul Frank T-shirts. I was like oh god yeah, I was obsessed with Paul Frank and rip those pyjamas. I don't know where, I tried to find them recently, I don't know where they went. Please get in contact. We love it. You can find us on Instagram @whoareyouwearingpod. There'll also be pictures of our guests up for the week and their items of clothing that they've mentioned in the podcast. So good, and you can email us at whoareyouwearingpod@gmail.com. Now, I always talk about an indie business, this is quite a big business, and it's, I'm going to talk about a company, a lot of you I think will be familiar with, but they're scottish, and they're committed to inclusivity, they're very aware of like the environmental impact that clothes and fashion have on the world, and I, do you know what, I thought that just summed up Susan pretty nicely. So I would like to talk about Snag Tights. Now if you listen to my other podcast, the all

killer no filler podcast. I have jokingly described Snag Tights before now as a cult because the people who wear them are evangelical about them, and now I've got some, I can see why. So I take it back. Well, no, I don't take it back. Because people who wear Snag Tights are still in a cult. They're just in the right cult. So you can get Tights from Snag, I mean, they do other stuff as well. But you can get tights, they go from sizes four to 36, and how you decide your size, you basically do like a wee quiz about it and then you get, well you put your height in, or your dress size, and then you can shop for tights knowing that they're actually going to fit you which is genuinely a modern miracle. They do really like strong colours and designs and they do it all with vegan dyes, with recycled water in the dyeing process. The production process is carbon neutral and there is no single use plastic in any part of the production, which is absolutely amazing because I knew that they were like, like surprisingly affordable for tights of that nature, and I had a feeling they would be ethical because of, you'd like, they use a really diverse range of models as well that come from their community, people who buy their tights, and so like that's classic sort of good guy behaviour, but sometimes that can be hiding an exploitative production chain. But that is not the case here which is delightful. Everyone who works directly for Snag gets paid a living wage as other people who work in their production chain too, again, that's unheard of, sort of checking at every level. Interestingly, if they make tights and they don't meet the standards, you know, like the quality standards for the company, they don't send them to landfill like most places do, they send it to the charity Hey Girls instead, which is just a brilliant thing. They've also got a recycling system set up for their tights so you can post them back and they recycle them for you. So just circular, circular model at every level. It's so brilliant. They sell socks and swimwear and loungewear and other bits too, and also the other thing I've mainly heard about tights obviously everyone bangs on about, but people I know absolutely swear by their chub rub shorts, you know for the summer that you whack under a skirt. People say they're absolute game changers. I'm not saying it like people say because I don't need them. It's only because I have some cycling shorts that I wear already. So maybe I'll branch out this summer and get some chub rub shorts as well. That is Snag Tights. Scottish, inclusive and just lovely to look at like Susan Calman. I'm gonna be back next Monday with Amrou Al-Kadhi aka drag performer supreme, Glamrou, and it's another brilliant conversation if I do say so myself. See you then. Who are you wearing is produced by Joe Southerd, the artwork is by Mary Phillips and the music is by Annie glass. This has been a Little Wander production.